

## TEACHING ENGLISH THROUGH MUSIC: A PROPOSAL OF MULTIMODAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN

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### Abstract

The present paper aims to explore the use of music and songs in the teaching of English as a second language to primary school children. By means of musical activities, the authors want to measure the progressive change in students' motivation and their academic results in English language skills. The theoretical framework in which this research is developed corresponds to Gardner's multiple intelligence theory, which can be recently linked to issues on multimodality in learning. Preliminary results show that music enhances linguistic intelligence while multiple ways of learning are practised in the classroom.

**Keywords:** English, L2, multimodality, music, Gardner.

### Resumen

Este artículo analiza el uso de música y canciones en la enseñanza del inglés como segunda lengua a niños de educación primaria. Mediante actividades musicales, las autoras quieren medir el cambio progresivo en la motivación de los estudiantes y sus resultados académicos en las diferentes destrezas lingüísticas en inglés. El marco teórico en el que se inserta este estudio corresponde con la teoría de las inteligencias múltiples de Gardner, que recientemente se une a aspectos de multimodalidad en el aprendizaje. Nuestros resultados preliminares muestran que la música favorece la inteligencia lingüística mientras que diversos modos de aprendizaje se ponen en práctica en el aula.

**Palabras clave:** inglés, L2, multimodalidad, música, Gardner.

### 1. Introduction and context

The European Commission (2006) carried out a study in which they tested pupils' level of English and French at the end of their Secondary Education. In such analysis, Spain occupied the twelfth position in a total of sixteen countries, what reveals the poor language acquisition stage Spanish students are in. In order to solve this problem, we need to move beyond teaching English as a second/foreign language, and start to embed it in class as the lingua franca it is in economy, tourism and industry sectors (Instituto Nacional de Evaluación Educativa, 2012). Multimodal teaching of English to Spanish young students will allow them to integrate English learning with other motivating activities at the same time. The aim of this paper is to describe a set of activities which teachers can easily incorporate to their daily classroom routine.

Social and cultural actions are inherent to teaching and cannot be ignored in language education. Therefore, culture and teaching a second language are closely related: in order to master a second language we have to learn not only vocabulary and grammar but also L2 sociocultural contexts to make a correct use of the language. In this case, we can make our students learn English culture through the use of traditional songs, pop songs, nursery rhymes and anthems, and all that entails the use of authentic songs for pedagogical purposes.

Music is also crucial for human beings out of school; it is always present in learners' daily life. Music includes a wide scope of fields: "sociocultural, musical, psychological and spirituals dimensions" (McCarthy, 2009: 30). By means of music, learners can feel real-life experiences thanks to songs, nursery rhymes, chants and anthems. Moreover, scholars claim that music is crucial in the physiological development of human beings. An example of this is how an unborn child can recognize melodies and his/her mother's voice from the outside of the womb, something vital for the development of cerebral functions.

## **2. Literature review: state of the art in the use of music in the language classroom**

As Storr (1992: 1) already pointed out, language and music have been present since our ancestors painted people dancing in the caverns. In fact, linguistic and musical issues are key disciplines in all cultures. Supporting this connection, Pinker (2002: 404) established that there is a strong link between humanity and music when researchers found bone-made flutes in caves in France and Germany (Silva, 2006: 25). Music is, therefore, traditionally linked with human ways of expression and language.

Music is also crucial in the physiological development of human beings. Jusczyk (1986) and Lecanuet et al. (1987), cited in Murphey (1990: 98), claimed that the foetus is able to recognise melodies and their mother's intonation while they are in the womb. In addition, Campbell (2001) carried out a piece of research that evidences the role of music in foetus formation. Apparently, there are anatomic differences among people who have studied music before they are seven years old and those who have not studied it. Music increases neuronal interconnections, and as a result, it enhances language development, namely, language production, text comprehension and vocabulary/lexicon. Furthermore, and from our interpersonal and multimodal perspective, music favours social relationships while it enriches cognitive processes in language learning (Failoni, 1993; Silva, 2006).

Darwin suggested that communicative abilities among human beings could have been originated due to the combination of music and modern language. Following Darwin, Galilei, Rousseau and Wittgenstein, they also found a relationship between these two disciplines. However, further analyses have proven that there exist outstanding differences between language and music which should also be mentioned in this paper. Marin and Perry (1999) and Peretz (2006), on their part, considered that music and language have little connection. The reason is that speech does not have pitch and rhythm as music does, and language grammar is not present in music, neither is semantic meaning. Besides, these authors and others claim that music can hold more emotion than language (Patel 2008).

In the present paper, we will try to demonstrate the close connections existing between linguistic and musical systems, which will facilitate foreign language acquisition in children. Following Patel: "as cognitive and neural systems, music and language are closely related" (2008: 417). In the same way, several studies such as those carried out by Fassbender (1996) and Pouthas (1996) consider that children are born musical, that is, infants show special abilities in the development of musical skills. According to Trehub (2000, 2003) and Trehub and Hannon (2006), children recognise pitch patterns and rhythm very easily, and they prefer "infant-directed singing over infant-directed speech" (Patel 2008: 377). Therefore, if we use infant songs in class, singing can make language learning much easier. Consequently, the teaching/learning focus shifts from purely linguistic matters towards a multimodal direction: music provides a wide range of semantic and symbolic possibilities by which English is learned.

Several scholars have shown that children discern emotional states displayed in music and they improve this ability during their school years. During the 1990s, Cunningham and Sterling (1998) and Dolgin and Adelson (1990) undertook a study where four year old children had to listen to a song and they had to describe it as *happy*, *sad*, *angry* or *frightening*. As a clear sign of children's capacity to identify melodies, their responses were the same as those given by adults in the same exercise.

Other studies have demonstrated that major modes of music make subjects feel happy and minor ones make listeners sad (Dowling, 1999). The modes of music are “different spatial patterns of excitation with different frequencies of oscillation” (Pierce, 1999: 10). Gerardi and Gerken (1995) carried out another experiment with children and music modes. This time subjects had to use happy or sad faces depending on their musical perceptions. Melody modes were major and minor and they went up and down, what means that they followed ascending and descending scales. These authors discovered that children by the age of eight were able to identify happy and sad songs with the same criterion as adults.

With the previous findings, teachers are encouraged to use music in class by choosing songs, rhymes, and chants to promote children's happiness and well being. If children are relaxed, they will feel more motivated to learn. This idea is related to Krashen's hypothesis:

For optimal learning to occur the affective filter must be weak. A weak filter means that a positive attitude toward learning is present. Because of the casual learning environment used when singing, songs are one method for achieving a weak affective filter and promoting language learning (1982: 228, cited in Paquette & Rieg 2008).

Taking into account Hill-Clarke and Robinson's classroom ideas (2003), music is good to increase vocabulary and comprehension skills. In the same way, music accentuates “oral language skill development, improves attention and memory, and enhances abstract thinking. Additionally, music can enhance students' creativity and cultural awareness” (Paquette & Rieg, 2008: 228). Gardner (2011) recently asserted that the musical intelligence is the first one to be overtly shown in children. Lozanov and Gateva (1988) underlined that learners who listened to baroque or classical music got better marks at school. Benenzon (1995) considered that people adapt their breathing to musical rhythm and are influenced by it because music can change their state of mind.

To conclude, using music for the teaching of a second language is not only a valuable resource, but it is also necessary to create a calmed and motivating classroom environment. It develops receptive and productive skills, and it encourages language acquisition. This turns the language teaching activity into a multilayered task where language input comes from different sources, making the whole learning process a global and more meaningful one.

### **3. Theoretical framework: Gardner's multiple intelligences supporting multimodality**

Both music and language acquisition develop in the right side of the brain. Campbell (1998: 203) went a step beyond that when he pinpointed that music activates both brain hemispheres, that is, creativity activates the right hemisphere and musical logic does so in the left one. Thus, language students can fully develop their brain thanks to music, becoming more capable to give solutions to the problems they face in life and in providing innovative ideas.

Romberg (2011) found out that infants who were eight to twelve months old learn language not only by hearing but also by watching their mother's face; this fact is an evidence of multimodal learning. Multimodal learning describes the learning process as something eclectic and, for this reason, songs are particularly

suitable for the teaching practice since they bring oral/aural input forward. Our students will listen to songs, rhymes, chants and anthems; they will watch some videos and they will move at the same time as they listen to them (Silva, 2006: 19-20). The teaching practice should encompass all multiple intelligences to develop every single one, to make learning more significant and to depart from each person's needs.

From a teaching standpoint, we have to take into account that our classes are heterogeneous, that is, there are different learning styles depending on the students. Each learner possesses distinctive educative needs owing to manifold individual and social factors which should be satisfied. We must understand that each individual is unique and therefore we should recognise their idiosyncratic differences. Consequently, teachers have to adapt themselves to the personal and social features of each learner, and select a methodology which fulfils students' diversity accordingly. For that reason, we choose the Theory of Multiple Intelligences by Howard Gardner to support our research and teaching aims.

### **3.1. Musical and linguistic intelligences:**

We can develop music and linguistic intelligences through the use of songs in the process of teaching/learning of a second language. Arnold and Fonseca state that the Theory of Multiple Intelligences "enables teachers to organize a variety of contexts that offer learners a variety of ways to engage meaning and strengthen memory pathways; it is a teacher-friendly tool for lesson planning that can increase the attractiveness of language learning tasks and therefore create favourable motivational condition"» (2004: 120).

It is a well-established fact that children are naturally stimulated to music. Music, language and children are the main characters of Lozanov's method; this author developed an innovative teaching methodology related to music called Suggestopaedia. Regarding this theory, Murphey (1992: 37, cited in Rosová, 2007: 13) stated: "the idea behind using the music is apparently to relax students' defences and to open up their minds to the language". With the use of songs, children will develop their linguistic intelligence because they will work with language and all language skills. They will develop both comprehension skills: listening (to the songs) and reading (the lyrics), and production skills: speaking (singing) and writing (creating and/ or changing lyrics).

### **3.2. Kinaesthetic and linguistic intelligences:**

The method of Total Physical Response (Asher, 1977) proves that children can learn a second language through movement. In this way, children can focus their attention on listening comprehension and body movement, and it is only when they are ready that they start to speak. This technique facilitates the memorization of language and minimises learner stress, multiplying the attention foci. With the use of songs, our students can dance whatever they like to express their emotions or make gestures following the song directions.

### **3.3. Interpersonal and linguistic intelligences:**

Gardner (2011: 253) claimed that the interpersonal intelligence consists of "the ability to notice and make distinctions among other individuals and, in particular, among their moods, temperaments, motivations, and intentions". The interpersonal intelligence is associated with learning a second language because we learn it to communicate with other people, to try to understand their beliefs and ideas and to live together in a more positive atmosphere (Arnold & Fonseca, 2004: 128).

Consequently, and in relation to our pedagogical purpose, children can pay attention to the lyrics and learn about other cultures through anthems, songs, chants and rhymes. In addition, music creates a relaxing and good atmosphere so that children feel comfortable and they like learning with their classmates. Music joins people and helps make group dynamics easier. Student success and participation in their social environment are very important in relation to language learning. Learners enjoy by playing together, watching and talking to each other and they can be worried about their classmates, being able to understand how they feel about themselves.

#### **4. Fieldwork analysis: a multimodal teaching proposal**

According to Barrios and García (2006), observation and analysis in class help teachers in decision-taking to widen their insights and strategies in the process of teaching a foreign language. This paper aims to present a curricular proposal for Teaching English as a Second Language, more specifically, to teach English to children from a multimodal perspective. Instead of presenting purely linguistic activities, children will be exposed to multiple stimuli coming from various sources: music, physical movement, and interpersonal relations. These classroom ideas go together with some preliminary results shown in graphs which indicate pre and post activities results in young learners of English.

The hypothesis we want to evidence, and the one which is behind our activity proposal, is: teaching English through a multimodal perspective improves students' motivation and results. We are going to use the confirmatory method using songs, rhymes, chants and anthems observing the activities in the group to confirm that using music in L2 teaching actually improves students' final results.

Our subjects of research are 40 students of the second cycle of Primary Education (3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> years). They are male and female students attending a public school in Malaga (Spain), where a strong bilingual policy is being implemented at all educational levels (i.e. pre-school years, primary and secondary education, and teacher training). According to Piaget (1923), eight to nine year old students are at the so-called *concrete operational stage*. At this stage, students start to use logical thinking and reasoning, what makes them understand song lyrics better. In addition, children use the second language to communicate and they are more receptive of language acquisition because of their brain plasticity at this age.

##### **4.1. Music and language: focusing on rhythm and pronunciation to learn a foreign language**

We are presenting some sets of activities combining musical input with foreign language learning. They were all implemented as part of our classroom routine in order to verify.

###### **4.1.1. *Old MacDonald* and his animal farm**

We have chosen the traditional song *Old MacDonald* (n.d.). In this song, each line introduces an animal from Old MacDonald's farm with its corresponding animal sound. First of all, students will listen to the song meanwhile we show animal flashcards to them. To develop their musical intelligence, one half of the class will sing it and then the other half will do the same. Here, we will focus on the intonation patterns and song rhythm. Afterwards, we will say an animal name and our learners will have to do the sound of the animal, as a revision of animal lexicon.

###### **4.1.2. The *name rap***

The *name rap* (Read, 2007: 187-188) is a special type of chant which children can easily produce. This is very useful for the first day of class so that children know a little about their partners. First of all, we will



indicate the rhythm of the chant with finger snaps and we will introduce ourselves. For instance, children would say: *Hello, my name is Robert, I like cats*. Children must remember the name and the sentence from the classmate next to them so that in the next round, instead of presenting themselves, they will introduce their classmate. Children will always repeat sentences with the rhythm of the chant. Our students will improve their musical and linguistic intelligence because they will remember structures at the same time as they sing. Furthermore, they will develop the interpersonal intelligence knowing their partners' motivations and names.

## **4.2. Kinaesthetics and language: movement and linguistic associations**

### **4.2.1. *Head, shoulders, knees and toes***

The traditional song *Head, shoulders, knees and toes* (n.d.) is a good way to introduce vocabulary or to remember it. We will start by watching the video and children will sing and touch the corresponding parts of their body. Then, we will sing and interpret the song but without visual reference. We will progressively add new verses with new vocabulary but with the same intonation and rhythm. At the end, we will sing the song altogether, trying to remember lyrics and body parts.

### **4.2.2. *If you're happy and you know it***

*If you're happy and you know it* (McQuinn, 2009) is a song in which children have to interpret the actions while they are singing. A song in which students have to move is a very good way to start the class, because if you activate your body, you will activate your brain. The actions are: *clap your hands, stamp your feet, turn around, wiggle your hips, stretch your arms, pat your head, touch your nose, point your toes*... These various body movements are connected to cultural issues as well, since each of them is related to greetings in different parts of the world.

We will listen to and watch the video of the song twice and then we will make gestures. After that, they will be grouped in fours or fives. They will be given the song lyrics we have created and they will have to order them as they like. Then, each group will sing the song to the class and their classmates will represent the song movements as they listen to it.

Thanks to this exercise, our students will not only develop visual and kinaesthetic intelligence but also interpersonal intelligence and the linguistic one. On the one hand, they will improve interpersonal intelligence by choosing the lyrics of the song, they will have to discuss and agree on which lyrics are appropriate so they will work cooperatively. On the other hand, they will learn how to say hello and goodbye in other languages. Our learners will also understand that we use the imperative mode for orders. Other intelligence we develop with this song is the intrapersonal one. As we have mentioned above, songs with major tones make people feel happier. So, we have to make learners aware of the fact that they have the capacity to change their mood thanks to music.

## **4.3. Interpersonal intelligence and language: let's interact with others to learn a language**

### **4.3.1. *Rainstorm***

This activity consists of "organizing sounds to represent ideas and compose and perform a musical picture" among all students (Paterson & Willis 2008: 82). We will start telling a story at the same time as we draw a storyline picture on the board:

The sun is hot. But there are dark clouds in the sky. The wind starts to blow. It gets stronger and stronger. Leaves fall off the trees. The sky gets darker. A few drops of rain – then more. The rain gets louder and heavier. It rains and it

rains. A clap of thunder and then lightening. More thunder! More heavy rain. The wind stops. Then the rain starts to slow down – gentler, slower, slower, and slower. The rain clouds pass overhead...Out comes the sun again. (Paterson & Willis 2008: 82)

After having drawn the picture, we explain to children that they have to represent each action. For instance, they can blow miming the wind, they can tap their finger nails representing rain drops and stamp their feet interpreting the thunder. Afterwards, in groups of five, they can create a new picture on a poster and represent it.

At the end, we could talk about weather from other countries or other cities, starting discussion topics with students. This activity allows us to develop various intelligences: the linguistic and musical intelligences (when paying attention to music and lyrics), the visual and kinaesthetic intelligences (when children are imitating and performing their own physical gestures) and the interpersonal one, as they interact with the rest of their classmates and with the teacher.

#### 4.3.2. *Who's got the chocolate?*

*Who's got the chocolate* is a chanting game adapted from a West Indian game: *Who stole the cookie from the cookie jar* (Read, 2007: 195-196). It is a chant which children normally enjoy because there is a similar one in Spanish. This chant would be useful to consolidate language items such as possessive pronouns and determiners. The game would consist of children sitting on a circle. Then we would bring a chocolate box to class, we would ask the question: *Who's got the chocolate from the chocolate box?* The chant would be:

Everyone: *Who's got the chocolate from the chocolate box?*

The teacher: *Alicia's got the chocolate from the chocolate box?*

Student A: *Who? Me?*

Everyone: *Yes! You!*

Student A: *Not me! Alberto's got the chocolate from the chocolate box.* And so on with the rest of the class. Children should not repeat any name that has been previously mentioned, and the game would finish when everyone has had a turn.

This chant is really joyful and it helps children to become more fluent. In addition, we will perform the song slapping our knees to make the rhythm. We will start very slowly but the speed will increase as the chant goes on. As we can see, we will develop linguistic and musical intelligences here.

## 5. Pedagogical Implications

With our proposal, teachers can pursue the following objectives in the classroom:

a) To enhance autonomous learning by giving students strategies and resources so that they can continue learning out of the classroom: learning languages is a task that takes time out of school. It is essential that children become autonomous so that they know how to learn outside school. Teachers should show “strategies related to raising awareness about what language learning is”, the reasons to learn it, etc., “metacognitive strategies” to be able to plan, check and evaluate their learning and “direct or cognitive strategies” so that learners are efficient when learning vocabulary and structures of a language (Pinter, 2006: 100). As Failoni (1993) suggests, music can enhance cultural awareness in and out of the classroom, something that enriches students' contact with the foreign language and expands his/her contact with it.

b) To create a pleasant and motivating classroom atmosphere where children feel safe and happy to communicate and learn: Krashen (1985) developed five hypotheses in relation to learning motivation: the Input hypothesis, the Acquisition-Learning hypothesis, the Natural Order hypothesis, the Monitor

hypothesis, and the Affective Filter hypothesis. The affective filter hypothesis plays a decisive role in language teaching. This filter is a brain system which controls the quantity of input that becomes actual intake. If the filter gets activated, learners turn stressed, lowering their self-confidence and being afraid of making mistakes. On the contrary, if the filter is low or null, students will feel very motivated, relaxed and enthusiastic about learning.

Using music in class helps to create a pleasant environment. Songs, rhymes, chants and anthems are relaxing, motivating and fun. We will use songs according to learners' interests and will create activities where children will work in harmony with their classmates. If children feel happy in the classroom, they will adopt a positive attitude towards the learning of English.

c) To improve attention and students' concentration and to develop their working memory: Connecticut University Education Department (Pryor 2007) carried out a study to prove that learning foreign languages improves comprehension, spatial intelligence, memory, ability to search solutions and the knowledge about the own language. According to Paquette and Rieg (2008), music enhances attention and long-term memory. Furthermore, it improves theoretical thinking, helping to develop learners' creativity.

With the iconic support of pictures, children will develop their attention and concentration since a visual support is helpful to catch students' attention. Visuals and music is a great combination to develop learners' memory.

d) To use English for meaningful purposes: the intelligence which helps us focus on meaning rather than form is the kinaesthetic one. This intelligence is related to the Total Physical Response's theory developed by the psychologist Asher (1977). Children center their attention on listening comprehension if they move according to the song lyrics. This is good both to develop memory and to acquire language.

Krashen (1985) makes a distinction between learning and acquiring a language. It is widely believed that we acquire our mother tongue through a subconscious process which comes from engaging in natural communication where individuals focus on meaning.

e) To create musical activities so that our learners improve the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing), English vocabulary, linguistic structures and pronunciation: children can establish connections among grammatical rules and by listening to the repetition of words and structures (Paquette & Rieg, 2008). Hill-Clarke and Robinson (2003) assumed that music is good to increase vocabulary and comprehension skills, making lexical repetitions more dynamic.

Linguistic intelligence and music one are similarly developed. Songs are music and speech, so both hemispheres (left and right sides of brain) work together when listening to music (Storr, 1992: 35). We will work on pitch, melody, rhythm, timbre and language features, so we will develop both intelligences simultaneously.

f) To propose creative teaching alternatives so that our learners get to know how and when to use language appropriately: sociolinguistics is the science that studies the relationship between language and society. We have to know how to use language in different cultural contexts. This has to do with pragmatics. Pragmatics is "the study of language use in general, (...) study of communication, (...) an approach to the study of language via language's communicative function" (Allott, 2010: 1). Children will see that vocabulary and expressions from an anthem, a pop song or a traditional nursery rhyme change according to the different situations and purposes.



g) To provide exercises in which children learn to show interest and respect towards the Anglo-Saxon culture: to have interpersonal intelligence is to become aware that there are people with similar or different feelings from the ones we have, with different traditions, with different lifestyles. Songs, chants, rhymes and anthems can show children English speaking countries' features. Singing together and working in groups will help learners to develop the interpersonal intelligence because pupils will have to communicate to agree at some point of the task. Moreover, music fosters unconscious learning thanks to the repetition of structures and vocabulary while it promotes affective and meaningful memorization.

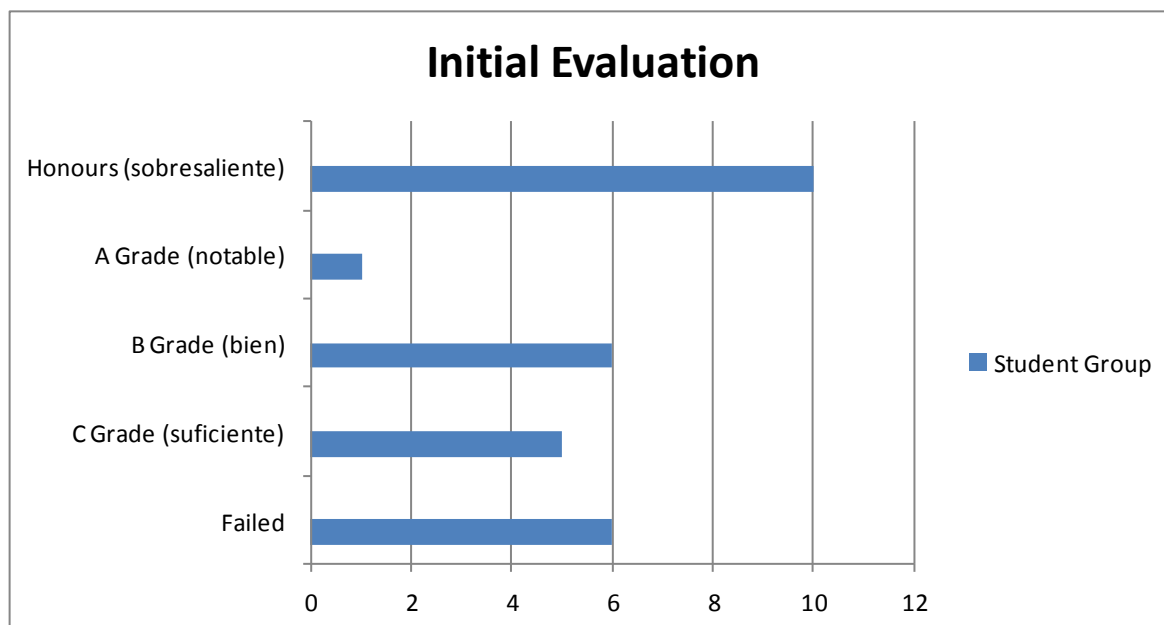
Motivation is an outstanding factor; we can introduce this element just by using music in the classroom. Singing is a joyful activity, not common in other school subjects, and children get an active role in singing which also motivates them.

Songs create a pleasant atmosphere in class, they enhance relationships between classmates and it is a relaxed activity in which learners feel they can enjoy and are learning without pressure. This provokes a students' desire on knowing more about the second language.

We learn a second language with the purpose of communication. So not only do they have to learn language but also culture and traditions: usage of authentic songs helps children to know more about the Anglo-Saxon culture.

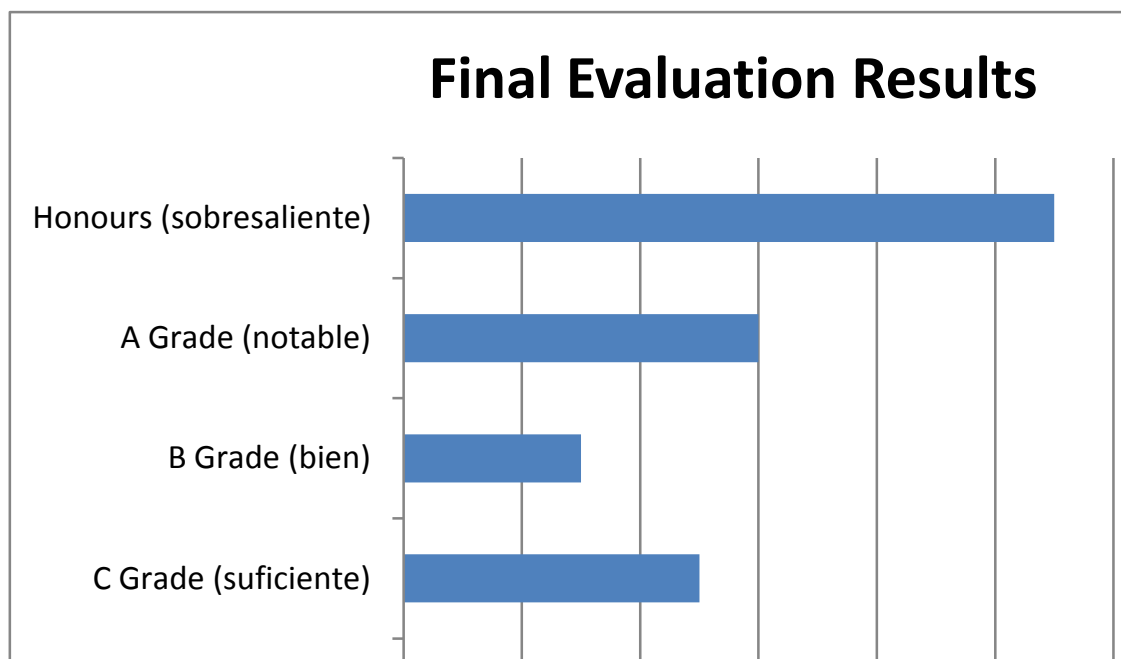
### 5.1. Positive results after evaluation

In addition, we have to consider how we are going to evaluate our students. The use of songs and music also facilitate the evaluating task along the year, as they turn a traditionally anxious moment into a moment of fun. We will take into account their efforts and their progresses by doing a formative evaluation throughout the year (e.g. continuous evaluation). In terms of evaluation, the following graphs clearly indicate the notable change in academic results after using songs and chants with our students:



As we can see, our student group underwent an evaluation on English oral skills at the beginning of the course. Although the results were good, there were strong differences among students' scores and we wanted to see the short-term evolution in the group. Only some weeks later, and after implementing the musical

activities described above, we carried out another evaluation similar to the previous one, where students had to listen to various recorded conversations and answer related questions. The results were the following:



This time students obtained better marks, most of the group passing the listening tests<sup>1</sup>. As we can infer from the graph above, more students scored higher, what means that the listening exercises practiced in class helped to improve their oral abilities in English.

## 6. Concluding remarks

We are living in an international society which needs to know more than one language to communicate. English is the language (after Mandarin Chinese) most widely spread in the world. For that reason, this linguistic system has turned into a lingua franca. Due to the globalization of our markets, we need to make learners able to speak English to communicate with foreign language countries, and oral skills play a crucial role in this intercultural communication.

Learning a second language also opens our minds, that is, we become interested in foreign people, their costumes and traditions, their lifestyles, their gastronomy, etc. We discover that there exist different ways of living which we must respect. Songs, chants, rhymes and anthems can show students English speaking countries' features and feel more tolerant towards them.

Students' communicative competence in other languages entails an improvement in their mother tongue because they can compare both languages looking for similitudes and differences being aware that each language has their own rules. Before students enter the so-called critical age period (Lenneberg 1967), they can absorb as much of a second language as it is possible due to their brain plasticity. In a dynamic and entertaining way, songs work as enriching linguistic input. Moreover, basic learning competences are enhanced with the use of music in the classroom, as it can be employed with theoretical reasoning, practical skills, personal attitudes and personal engagement, so varied possibilities with music are in the class.

<sup>1</sup> The listening tests employed in this research work are those offered by Cambridge University Press corresponding to movers and flyers (A2 levels). Some of these listening exercises included songs.

Apart from learning English in the classroom, our activity proposal enhances children autonomy. For that reason, we provide our students strategies to continue learning out of school (Pinter, 2006): the use of songs as a study technique will provide learning opportunities out of the classroom as well. Some of the proposed techniques to practise L2 English are listening to the radio, watching television, reading books, magazines and newspapers, searching information on the Internet, living in other countries, going to language exchanges (tandems), taking advantage of speaking with foreign people without being afraid of making mistakes, singing songs, among others. All these activities promote different human intelligences, which are covered in this article as we believe the learning of a foreign language is something global and multimodal (Muñoz Luna, 2010).

Several scholars have shown that children discern emotional states displayed in music and they improve this ability during their school years (Cunningham & Sterling, 1998; Dolgin & Adelson, 1990). Other studies have demonstrated that major modes of music make subjects feel happy and minor ones make listeners sad (Dowling, 1999). For this reason, we have chosen songs, rhymes, chants... to encourage children's happiness and well-being, to create a positive and pleasant atmosphere in the classroom which makes a favourable learning context.

Children have developed their linguistic and musical intelligence with the use of songs because they have worked with language and with pitch and rhythm. They have also enhanced visual/spatial intelligence and kinaesthetic one in the classroom learning vocabulary through pictures and miming lyrics songs. Our learners have improved their interpersonal intelligence working in pairs and in groups and learning songs from English speaking countries. In addition, they have developed their intrapersonal intelligence as they have discovered that when they sing they experiment emotions which make them feel happy. So they have found out how to learn in a grateful way.

For the selection of songs for this teaching proposal, we have taken into account students' age, their interests and needs, the difficulty of the lyrics and the purpose of the activity. We have used authentic songs, adapted songs, action songs, chants, nursery rhymes and anthems among others. In this way, we have covered all teaching phases in the classroom, as well as most learning styles and preferences. As our results show, there is a notable improvement in students' oral skills when they use songs to learn a language, and particularly when they relate these songs to physical, visual, or interpersonal purposes. This multimodal learning allows for a meaningful teaching practice which brings only positive outcomes in the foreign language classroom.

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